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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4784
INFO RUEHKV/AMEMBASSY KIEV PRIORITY 3376
RUEHMO/AMEMBASSY MOSCOW PRIORITY 3526
RUEHRA/AMEMBASSY RIGA PRIORITY 1740
RUEHVL/AMEMBASSY VILNIUS PRIORITY 3752
RUEHWR/AMEMBASSY WARSAW PRIORITY 3392
RUEHBS/USMISSION USEU PRIORITY 0120
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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREF](#) [BO](#)
SUBJECT: POLICE BRIEFLY DETAINED OPPOSITION LEADER
MILINKEVICH

Classified By: Charge d'Affairs Constance Phlipot for Reasons 1.4 B and D

11. (C) On July 26, two Polotsk traffic police officers stopped a vehicle carrying former opposition presidential candidate Aleksandr Milinkevich, his wife Inna Kulei, press secretary Pavel Mazheiko, and Belarusian Popular Front deputy

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chairman Aleksey Yanukevich on their way to visit political prisoner Pavel Severinets in the Vitebsk region. Poloff confirmed with Mazheiko on July 27 that another car arrived on the scene shortly after police stopped Milinkevich's vehicle and several individuals in plainclothes got out to "control the situation." The police searched the vehicle and found among other things old leaflets from Milinkevich's election campaign. The traffic police escorted Milinkevich's vehicle to the local Polotsk police station before allowing them to proceed on their way. Mazheiko reported that the group was detained for approximately one hour.

12. (C) According to Mazheiko, Milinkevich will probably not make a statement about the brief detention given that the police treated the group professionally and courteously. Although the local authorities failed to provide a motive for stopping his vehicle and Milinkevich intends to speak with a lawyer, Mazheiko noted that the opposition coalition leader will likely not pursue any legal action since he has little confidence in Lukashenko's legal system.

13. (C) Comment: The GOB's harassment of Milinkevich occurred against the backdrop of several other recent repressive acts by the GOB, including the sentencing of opposition presidential candidate Aleksandr Kozulin to five and one-half years imprisonment, opposition leader Anotoly Lebedko's 10-day sentence, and the commencement of the trial of Partnership NGO activists on July 28. The brief detention of Milinkevich could have served as a warning to the opposition leader to refrain from engaging in more high-profile activities, but Milinkevich's calm reaction to the incident serves as some indication that he does not believe his detainment was a particularly egregious act.
Phlipot